



# The Marine Corps Information Operations Center

*By the MCIOC Corner Stone Staff*

In the information age, the 21st century warfighter cannot ignore the global proliferation of information, such as the twenty-four hour news cycle, internet blogs, the pervasiveness of wireless communication devices and other mediums traveling throughout the world nearly instantly.

Combatant Commanders have prioritized the integration of information operations into joint warfighting missions. The Marine Corps responded to this call in April of 2005 when then Commandant, General M.W. Hagee stated the Marine Corps will "...fully integrate Information Operations into all aspects of MAGTF Operations. Focus on abilities to influence key target audiences and personnel across the spectrum of conflict."

In order to meet this intent, down to the tactical level, the Corps is establishing the Marine Corps Information Operation Center (MCIOC). Set to stand-up in 2009 on Marine Corps Base Quantico, the MCIOC mission will be to provide the MAGTF a full spectrum and readily accessible Marine Corps IO resources.

Major Barry Craft, who serves at Headquarters Marine Corps as the Joint Information Operations Action Officer explained, "Anyone can view the nightly news and see that IO is becoming an essential part of routine military operations world-wide. In fact you can see occasional video messages from extremists on TV news, a form of enemy IO, in order to sensitize the local populace to their cause."

Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom after action reports have highlighted IO has helped stifle or prevent many conflicts. Information operations are another tool in the commander's kit to complete his mission by mitigating an enemy's ability to disseminate hostile propaganda or disinformation that can influence populations, regimes, militaries and their leadership.

"It is not uncommon for Marines to witness a prevalence of effective enemy propaganda on local radio or TV stations in theater. They are facing a modern, sophisticated enemy force. And that enemy is becoming more adept in exploiting information technology to their advantage," said LtCol Mitch Rios, who serves as the Information Operations Chief at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Along with advancing technology, commanders at the "tip-of-the-spear" find information, if used effectively, is a cogent means to secure, shape and condition the battle space similar to direct and indirect fire weapon systems organic to the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF).

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A critical MCIOC capability will be providing a MAGTF a regionally specific IO support team during contingency operations and exercises. They will assist MAGTF staffs with the development and execution of their IO plan by providing subject matter experts and personnel culturally trained in whatever region the MAGTF is operating in. This will provide the MAGTF commander the capability to influence adversary information and decision-making systems while protecting his own.

In addition to operational support, the MCIOC will provide the ability for the MAGTF Commander to leverage the other service, joint and federal agency IO capabilities and IO centric intelligence expertise through reach back facilitated by relationships developed by the MCIOC.

Major David Clapp, the IO Capabilities, Integration Officer at Marine Corps Combat Development Command said, "our deployed MAGTFs need an IO 'reach-back' capability. The MCIOC will be that support, ensuring IO resources and subject matter experts proficient in the capabilities of IO are readily available."

The MCIOC will also provide the MAGTFs a "reach-across" capability, working closely with other service branch IO organizations. "Since the MAGTF fights in a joint or 'purple' environment today, the MCIOC will work with Joint IO teams to best support our missions during joint operations," said Clapp.

The MCIOC implementation team has a long road ahead, but they reached some important development milestones. "Our small cornerstone staff has worked hard to determine our facilities, force structure, training and other requirements across the DOTMLPF (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities) spectrum. Now we need to get the word out there that we are looking for interested Marines with a background in Information Operations, intelligence, and other support functions, to join our team," said Rios.

Once fully operations capable in FY 2010, the MCIOC will staff more than 160 Marines and civilians, specializing in IO related fields. "The MCIOC will do great things for the Corps. Marines need to know joining this team will be a unique and fulfilling opportunity. They will make an impact on the Corps' future warfighting success," said Craft. 